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THE WORK OF THE WOMEN'S CLUBS IN CALIFORNIA

BY DOROTHEA MOORE

The earliest activities of the women of the Pacific coast—especially in San Francisco, its largest centre—were begun in an organization called the California Club of California. This was organized on the same general lines as the Chicago Woman's Club and had it for model and inspiration.

The first meeting was held in San Francisco at the house of Mrs. Lovell White about ten years ago. At that meeting a few women were present and the club had neither means nor position—nothing in fact but good intentions. It was organized purely for broad civic work and has been continued on these lines until today when it has over five hundred members, a fine club house and an enviable position among the recognized civic forces of the state.

So much space is given to it not for personal reasons but because it was the pioneer club and has set the standard for the many which have followed it.

A list of its activities would make an article in itself, as it has actively concerned itself in every movement of a rapidly growing city as well as in legislative movements for the entire state.

Its first modest action was the holding of a flower market in the central public square with music, etc. This was successful and led to a movement for a public playground. Such a playground was opened and maintained by it until its success induced the city to take it over and to equip others. The first Arts and Crafts Exhibit was held under its auspices and here for the first time the Club had civic recognition, receiving money from the State Board of Trade for its initial expenses and returning the same at the close of a successful exhibit. From this time on The Merchants' Association recognized the Club in all public movements, and it had entire command of the press. School rooms were decorated, traveling libraries and portfolios were sent to towns and schools through

the state, music was provided for the parks and numerous minor civic matters kept going in the city. A larger activity was then begun in the State. Bills for the protection of bird life and for the protection of the forests were passed, women physicians were placed in the Insane Asylums and Homes for the Feeble Minded and the greater part of the work for a Juvenile Court and better Child Labor Laws was done with the aid of the State Federation, now formed for six years, and having eleven thousand members.

Some three years ago an Out Door Art League was formed, affiliated with the national society of that name. This has also done splendid special work for forestry and the Big Trees bill in Washington.

This organization has planted school yards, cleaned up vacant yards, had 200 unsightly poles removed from the city streets, secured the care and cleaning of the ocean front, helped actively in the famous fight for the retention of the street flower markets, now fully secured by city ordinance, secured many thousand votes for the purchase and preservation of Telegraph Hill, a noted historic spot, threatened by destruction from a greedy corporation—secured over one million names for the petition to President concerning the preservation of the Calaveras Big Tree Grove, secured \$5,000 to park and plant the grounds and street about the Mission Dolores and at present is planting vines and having trees planted on the barren slopes belonging to the Federal Government of Yerba Buena Island.

The Out Door Art League—in the interest of union and strength, recently joined its membership to that of the California Club and together the Clubs are carrying on civic work. A bill is now before the national Congress trying to secure for California the five percent for the sale of school lands which other states have enjoyed.* The clubs are working also for parental schools, the prevention of tuberculosis, including a state sanatorium; against an overhead trolley system for San Francisco, etc., etc.

Three clubs in the Alameda district own club-houses, four are building; nearly all the others are laying by funds to that end.

The altruistic work of these clubs has been to assist in securing women physicians in insane asylums and homes for feeble minded throughout the state; to donate money to the Club House

* At time of proofreading this bill had passed Congress.

Loan Fund; to help pay the probation officer in the county; to sign petitions for forest protection; to send out circulating libraries. One has given a well-selected library to an Indian school, one supports a hospital bed, several clubs are doing extensive tree-planting and interesting themselves in other lines of city improvement. One young, ambitious, and successful club has secured a high school for its town, and established kitchen gardens in vacant lots. One club has done wonderful work through its sewing schools, cooking schools, and summer schools,—all conducted in the club house. Another has provided a probation officer for adults and matrons for women in jails and prisons.

In the San Joaquin Valley District hundreds of trees have been set out along the highways.

The southern portion of the State, especially in Los Angeles, had done much for child labor legislation and most of all for the Consumers' League movement. The little club of Vallejo owned and managed a fire engine until the town authorities got ashamed and got one of their own.

The women of Los Angeles as organized did the important work of educating public opinion so strongly in the election of a non-partizan school board as to make the election secure.

Juvenile court workers in Los Angeles County are rejoicing over the passage of the bill which provides for the payment by the county of the salaries of two probation officers. This brings relief to the club women who have been supporting this object, and civic workers report most satisfactory progress. Plans are in formation to secure a field secretary whose duty shall be to obtain homes for such children as are deemed in need of same. Also it is purposed to build a detention home.

The Outdoor Art Section of the Civic Federation has obtained, through the efforts of its chairman, a public playground, 300 feet square, for the children of Los Angeles, equipped it with an artistic house for the superintendent, a very complete outdoor gymnasium, merry-go-rounds, swings, teeter-boards, tennis and hand-ball courts and a baseball diamond. Ground for a second playground has been secured. The Outdoor Art Section has also inaugurated a garden contest, plants, seeds and vines being given out from five centers to over 1,000 children. Prizes aggregating \$150.00 have been offered for the best gardens of various sizes.

The special district civic work this year will be the publication of a pamphlet containing the California Laws for Women and Children. Experienced lawyers will edit this volume and it is hoped to place a copy in the hands of at least every club woman in the district.

The formation of the new state Art Committee has stimulated interest along art lines. Under the leadership of the Ruskin Art Club, the club women of Los Angeles have secured a new organization whereby the women of the Southwest will build a permanent art gallery in Los Angeles or some site in Southern California to be determined upon later. This is the successful result of the earnest and faithful efforts so long put forth by the Ruskin Art Club toward the establishment of an institution wide-spreading in its influence for broadened culture.

Many clubs are occupying their own club houses, notably the Contemporary Club of Redlands, the La Jolla Woman's Club, the Wednesday and San Diego Clubs of San Diego, the Saturday Afternoon Club of Monrovia, The Ebell of Long Beach, the Shakespeare Club of Pasadena, and the Ebell of Los Angeles. The last mentioned has been handled so fortunately and wisely that its Building Association has just declared a twenty-five per cent dividend to stockholders.

The California Federation has contributed \$1,000.00 to the Club House Loan Fund at Berkeley. This amount has been used to furnish and equip a Club House for women students at the State University. When the returns reach one thousand dollars, another house is furnished, and thus a perpetual fund is established. One club, through its interest in our Club House Loan Fund, has decided to investigate the subject, "The housing of women students at all of our state universities."

In every town and city the clubs have now an acknowledged position for which they no longer need to fight and which they must now merely keep fresh and confident with ever more and wiser effort.

The west is an easy field—the men are willing partners and have always been generous and kindly advisers and aids.

As the management of legislation comes to be better understood more legislation will be attempted and proposed in a way to win success. Civil service in the whole state is what ought to be the great next thing, for it is the basis of all the best civic life.